

Jennifer PETRUSIS

Shareholder

LOS ANGELES

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Jennifer Petrusis has devoted her practice to advising and representing police departments and public agencies. With extensive experience in civil litigation and employment law, and knowledge of criminal law and procedure, Jennifer is in the unique position of being able to advise and represent police departments and their members in a variety of contexts.

Jennifer splits her practice between being a legal advisor to police departments, and vigorously litigating on behalf of cities, public employees, and peace officers. As a police defense litigator, Jennifer has represented police officers in police liability and civil rights lawsuits alleging excessive force, wrongful death, false arrest, false imprisonment, illegal search and seizure, malicious prosecution, personal injury, and other torts. Additionally, Jennifer's experience in representing cities and their employees includes lawsuits alleging constitutional rights violations and various allegations of tort liability and damage claims, including inverse condemnation, employment claims, and dangerous condition of public property.

Jennifer also regularly advises her police clients regarding policies and procedures, including those regarding new and emerging technologies such as body-worn cameras, automated license plate readers, and long-range acoustic devices. Jennifer represents several police departments in *Pitchess* and *Brady* Motions, and assists records staff in responding to various types of document requests, such as Public Records Act requests, subpoenas, criminal discovery requests, and civil discovery requests. Jennifer also regularly files petitions to retain and destroy confiscated deadly weapons and advises property and evidence technicians on various retention and return of property matters.

Jennifer serves as the firm's lead employment litigator, and has successfully defended public agencies in civil lawsuits brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act, Fair Employment and Housing Act, and California Labor Code.

PRACTICE AREAS

Litigation

FOCUS AREAS

Litigation (Labor & Employment)

Municipal Code Enforcement

Police Practices (Litigation)

EDUCATION

J.D., University of California,
Los Angeles School of Law

B.A., *summa cum laude*,
University of California, Los
Angeles

She has also won anti-SLAPP motions against former public employees based on public officials' rights to engage in protected speech, and has successfully defeated writ petitions seeking to overturn public agencies' disciplinary decisions.

Jennifer is one of the relatively few private civil attorneys with experience in obtaining a gang injunction. Jennifer was part of the team that obtained an injunction on behalf of the City of Monrovia against the activities of two rival criminal street gangs. The injunction prohibits members of the two gangs from publicly congregating together, and from engaging in specified activities, within a three and one-half square mile "Safety Zone" the court designated in parts of Monrovia and adjacent unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

Jennifer is also General Counsel for the South Bay Regional Public Communications Authority, a Joint Powers Authority that provides police and fire dispatch services to several cities in the South Bay.

Jennifer is also a code prosecutor and has represented several cities in administrative, criminal, and civil code enforcement matters including for the Cities of Artesia, Jurupa Valley, Temecula, Manhattan Beach, Mission Viejo, Moorpark, Calimesa, La Mirada, Laguna Niguel, Seal Beach, and Banning.

WORK FOR CLIENTS

Jennifer represents the police departments of the Cities of Beverly Hills, Brea, Covina, Davis, Fairfield, Indio, Manhattan Beach, Monrovia, Seal Beach, and for the Hollywood Burbank Airport.

Additionally, Jennifer provides legal advice and represents the Cities of Agoura Hills, Beverly Hills, Calimesa, Gardena, Hidden Hills, Highland, Jurupa Valley, La Mirada, Moorpark, Rancho Cucamonga, Temecula, Westlake Village, and Yucaipa.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Prior to joining Richards, Watson & Gershon in 2006, Jennifer was an associate with Nelson & Fulton, a law firm that provides civil defense representation for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and represents the Sheriff's Department in *Pitchess* Motions. Between Nelson & Fulton and Richards, Watson & Gershon, Jennifer has devoted her entire practice of law to representing law enforcement agencies and public agencies, and she has appeared at hundreds of *Pitchess* and *Brady* Motion-related hearings.

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Member, International Municipal Lawyers Association

Member, Los Angeles County Bar Association

EXPERIENCE

HIGHLIGHTED REPRESENTATIONS

- ▶ ***Collender v. City of Brea***. Jennifer represented the City of Brea and one of its police officer as second chair trial counsel in connection with an officer involved fatal shooting of an unarmed man. The decedent was alleged to have committed an armed robbery and was reaching towards his pocket when the officer attempted to arrest him. The shooting was captured on video. Plaintiffs claimed that the City defendants used excessive force. The jury deliberated for less than a day and found in favor of defendants.
- ▶ **Gang Injunction on behalf of City of Monrovia**. Jennifer was part of the team that obtained an injunction on behalf of the City of Monrovia against the activities of two rival criminal street gangs. The injunction prohibits members of the two gangs from publicly congregating together, and from engaging in specified activities, within a three and one-half square mile "Safety Zone" the court designated in parts of Monrovia and adjacent unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

NEWS

Police Officers Are Not Absolutely Immune From Tort Liability Arising Out of Law Enforcement Investigations; Other Immunities May Apply

07.27.2023

Local Firearms Ordinance Upheld

10.19.2022

"Good Cause" Requirement for Concealed Firearm License Invalidated

06.29.2022

Safety Risk Justifies Short-Notice Clearing of Homeless Encampments Along a Freeway

05.16.2022

Ninth Circuit Upholds California's Ban on Large-Capacity Firearm Magazines

12.06.2021

Hearing Required Before Return of Confiscated Weapons

10.04.2021

New Law Regulates Use of Deadly Force by Peace Officers

09.03.2019

Law Enforcement Agencies Must Disclose SB 1421 Records Created Before January 1, 2019

04.05.2019

Law Enforcement Agencies Must Disclose Video and Audio Recordings Relating to a "Critical Incident" and Certain Investigation Records Without Pitchess Process Under New Laws

10.01.2018

Fourth Amendment Search Warrant or Consent Requirement Applies to Unauthorized Rental Car Drivers and Vehicles Parked on Private Property

06.06.2018

Fourth Amendment Search Warrant or Consent Requirement Applies to Unauthorized Rental Car Drivers and Vehicles Parked on Private Property

06.06.2018

U.S. Supreme Court Clarifies Probable Cause Standard for Warrantless Arrests

02.02.2018

PRESENTATIONS

Harrassment Prevention Training

New Mayors and Councilmembers Academy, 03.29.2022

Elected Officials & Employment Laws: When the Rules Don't Apply

League City Attorneys' Spring Conference, 04.30.2021

Public Records Act and the New Disclosure Requirements: AB 748 and SB 1421

Alameda County Chiefs of Police and Sheriff's Association, 01.23.2019

Have Body Cameras Changed Policing?

George E. Brown, Jr. Federal Courthouse, Courtroom 4, 09.27.2018

Body-Worn Cameras in Critical Incidents

Orange County City Attorney's Association, 07.2018

Body-Worn Cameras in Critical Incidents

Independent Cities Association, 01.2018

Body-Worn Cameras and Critical Incidents
League of California Cities Annual Conference, 09.2017

Legal Issues Surrounding Property & Evidence
California Association For Property & Evidence (CAPE), 03.2016

Confiscated Weapons Petitions
League of California Cities Webinar, 02.2013

PUBLICATIONS

Sky High? The Federal-State Marijuana Law Conflict and Airline Travelers
Air and Space Lawyer, Volume 34, Number 1, 2021